

ocellation in the butterfly by Ford and his colleagues (Ford, E. B. 1972 *Ecological genetics*. Methuen), the butterfly was considered incapable of penetrating vegetation barriers lacking suitable host plant biotope. However, occurrence in woodland is not atypical for the butterfly on Alderley Edge. In the detailed MRR study on Brereton Heath in 1987 meadow browns were frequently recorded flying over a woodland barrier and observed in the light birch woodland (Shreeve, T. G. et al. 1996, Uniformity of wing spotting of *Maniola jurtina* (L.) (Lep., Satyrinae) in relation to environmental heterogeneity. *Nota Lepidopterologica* 18: 77-92) and were also regularly observed in the woodland away from host plant locations in an earlier study on Alderley Edge (Cook, L. M. et al. 2001. Butterfly-host plant fidelity, vagrancy and a measurement of mobility from distribution maps. *Ecography*, 24: 497-504). In the nearby urban areas of Wilmslow and Sale, they are often seen outside their typical biotopes flying over cut grass, car parks and buildings. In hot sunny weather, it would appear that they are able to behave more like the butterfly in Mediterranean olive groves and Cypress woodland.– R. L. H. DENNIS, 4 Fairfax Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 6EY.

Unusual abundance of flies (Diptera) at a moth trap on a cold winter's evening

On a recording trip to the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's nature reserve at Ashwell Chalk Quarry, in northern Hertfordshire, on the night of 2 November 2002, four moth traps were set up at various positions and the lights turned on at 16.30 hours. The temperature soon fell rapidly from the initial 15°C and light rain fell throughout the session; it was decidedly cold by 18.00 hours. A grand total of nine moths, comprising six species, was less than exciting and by 20.00 we were packed up and on the way home. However, whilst three of the lights produced just about nothing other than their share of the moths, one lamp, set in a small wooded area and adjacent to the entrance to a badger sett, was swarming with flies within half an hour of lighting up – and was still swarming at home time.

Two things led us to the conclusion that this was unusual. First, there was an exceptionally large number of flies – many more than normally expected at a light trap set in a chalk landscape and miles away from any wetland habitat. Second, although many Diptera hibernate as adults, the late date and the somewhat cold evening air were not really conditions under which large swarms of flies were expected. And I do mean swarms! There were dozens of them – to the extent that putting one's head inside the trap to look for moths on the egg trays was unpleasant, with flies getting behind spectacles and inside ears! A sample of the offending insects was collected using a large pooter, pinned and eventually dispatched to Laurence Clemons – who tells me that he actually likes these beasts! The list follows (the Syrphidae identified by myself, the rest by Laurence, to whom I am most grateful):

Syrphidae:	<i>Eristalis tenax</i> (L.)
Fanniidae:	<i>Fannia lepida</i> (Wiedemann); <i>Fannia monilis</i> (Haliday)
Muscidae:	<i>Hydrotaea cyrtonemrina</i> (Zett.); <i>H. similis</i> Meade; <i>Morellia simplex</i> (Loew); <i>Phaonia subventa</i> (Harris); <i>P. lardarins</i> (Fabr.)
Sphaeroceridae:	<i>Crimomyia fimetaria</i> (Mg.); <i>Limosina silvatica</i> (Mg.)
Calliphoridae:	<i>Pollenia angustigena</i> Wainwright
Scathophagidae:	<i>Scathophaga stercoraria</i> (L.)
Sarcophagidae:	<i>Sarcophaga carnea</i> agg. (the example collected had damaged genitalia and could not be named further)

Whilst the proximity of a badger sett may have in some way influenced the number and presence of the flies, it is nevertheless to be borne in mind that badgers are very clean animals and that they have their fixed-position latrines; the nearest latrine that could be found by day was not all that nearby and, again, the weather was cold. I have no explanation for this phenomenon, but it seems unusual and that alone is justification for placing it on record.—COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP (E-mail: colinwplant@ntlworld.com).

Hazards of butterfly collecting. “What is in the pot?” – Ghana, 1993

I came to Bia National Park in Ghana for the first time in 1993, staying in a small ranger camp just at the edge of a small bit of virgin forest. It was the first of Ghana’s national parks and was set up in thirty years by Claude Martin, later to become director of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF); he had even compiled a modest list of butterflies during his three years in almost complete isolation. It was in his old house that I was to stay – a fine room, running water, a real toilet, and electricity were promised.

Evidently my briefers at the Ghana Wildlife Department had not been quite up-to-date. The room was in a frightful state, the toilet blocked by rubble and a collapsed septic-tank, and electricity had never been connected. But there was a raised veranda with a lovely view in front of which I could park my Lada Niva (“Sehevy”) and run a cable from the cigarette lighter to my computer. My camp chair, table, and camp-bed fitted snugly under a serviceable part of the awning. That’s not bad for accommodation in the sticks.

Next on the agenda in a new place is fixing up some cooking. You don’t want to drag too much stuff of your own around, and when daylight lasts only from 06.00 to 18.00 you do not want to waste time cooking. Four or five women, wives of the forest guards, asked: “Do you like snails?” The Bia area is the snail capital of Ghana – African Giant Snails, growing to the size of a clenched fist. I had been keen to try them, so the answer was an emphatic “Yes!” There were the usual worries about whether someone like me could stomach “spicy African food” – actually quite tame for someone who grew up in India. “You must cook it just as you do for your husband” I said. “Smoked fish would also be fine”, I added. The concept of a purely vegetarian meal is almost inconceivable, even among the poor.